Utilisation of new media in communicating insecurity in Southeast Nigeria

Jumbo Cynthia N [a,1], Asemah Ezekiel S [b,2], BJC Anyanwu [b,3], Onyebuhi Alexander Chima [a,4], Etumnu Emeka Williams [a,5,*], Oba Sunday Aikuirawo Anyi [c,6]

[a] Department of Mass Communication, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria

[b] Department of Mass Communication, Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Nigeria

[c] Department of Mass Communication, Ekiti State University, Nigeria

[1] cynthianjumbo@gmail.com; [2] asemahezekiels@yahoo.com; [3] bjcanyanwu1@gmail.com; [4] greatonyebuchi@gmail.com; [5] etumnuemeka@gmail.com[*];

[6] aikuniyi@gmail.com

* corresponding author

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to describe how in recent times, the issue of insecurity in the southeast of Nigeria is alarming. People are no longer safe as they have become targets for the perpetrators of insecurity within the region. In all of these cases, people must be fully aware of the level of insecurity in a specific location in order to determine the next course of action. In order to achieve this, this study examined the use of new media to communicate insecurity in Southeast Nigeria. The study was founded on the premise of technological determinism. In this research, a survey research approach was used. Using the Wimmer and Dominick sample size calculator, a sample of 384 was generated from the study's population of 22,012,828. A questionnaire was utilised as a data collection tool. Meanwhile, the multistage sampling procedure was used. Data was analysed with the use of descriptive statistics and pie chart. The finding showed that 51.0% of respondents had been exposed to insecurity messages via new media to a very large extent. It was also revealed that on an average of 74.8% (N=367), new media has been used in communicating insecurity among residents in southeastern Nigeria to a very large extent. It was recommended that new media users should be sensitized on the need to use the platform appropriately or with a sense of responsibility instead of using it to fuel more security problems within the southeastern region of Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Security is perhaps one of the biggest menaces facing the world today, particularly our country, Nigeria (Akinyetun, 2021). More than ever before, we are living in the period of grave security challenge in Nigeria (Okoli & Agada, 2014). Recently, the issue of insecurity in the southeast of Nigeria has becoming alarming (B.O et al., 2021). People are no longer safe as they have become targets for the perpetrators of insecurity within the region. According to Onyeneke et al., (2018), the country's Southeast region continues to experience a high level of insecurity, t he area reports incidences of burning of security facilities (Osabohien et al., 2020), the murder of security personnel, and the destruction of innocent citizen lives almost every day (Ezeh & Nkamnebe, 2020). In addition to endangering the basic foundation of Nigerian society and fostering a state of fear, unease, and worry, the country's economy has also suffered a fatal blow as a result of the ongoing state of insecurity (Okedo-Alex et al., 2021). The spate of insecurity has made people to be

conscious of their environment and always eager to get information that will help them plan their next moves (MacMullin & Taylor, 1984).

Southeast residents are always looking out for information that will enable them averts danger owing to the incessant security issues in almost all the parts of the region (Ekwok et al., 2022). In this situation the media have an important role to play towards helping southeastern residents in accessing information about insecurity (Ogbuanya et al., 2021). In view of this, Montag et al., (2021) noted that the members of the public rely on the media not just as main sources of information, but also the basis on which they form their opinions on events that take place in the society (Minoo Kyalo, 2018). This implies that people depend on the media to inform them of events in their immediate surroundings (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018). Even accessing information is now simple as a result of new media technologies (Ukegbu et al., 2019).

Laksana & Fadhilah (2021) assert that the emergence of new media has caused the world to switch from analogue to digital, which has had an impact on every aspect of our life. Social network is a new technology through which people now communicate and interact freely with the rest of the world especially in terms of passing security information. In the same vein, the National Communication Commission [NCC] (2019) observed that the new media are changing how individuals interact, create, save, share, and react to information (Gu et al., 2019). The audience can contribute, remark, discuss, and even further disseminate the news, which is also transforming traditional news media into an interactive and interactive media (Chen et al., 2011). The ability of new media to provide extremely effective platforms that allow people to freely engage and communicate at any time, anyplace, in real time, and on a global scale is another aspect of its strength (McMullan, 2020).

With the security situation in the southeast people want to be armed with information that will be useful to them in terms of being security conscious (Eginli & Tas, 2018). This explains why most people as soon they hear there is a security situation in a particular place their next move is swapping into their smart phones to see if there is any security issue report and subsequently spreading it (Dewing, 2010).

From empirical evidence, there is a dearth of literature in the area of using new media in communicating insecurity in the southeast and that is what informed this study (Tutgun-Ünal, 2020). Base on the foregoing, the researchers sought to investigate the utilisation of new media in communicating insecurity in southeast Nigeria (Nwagboso, 2016). The specific objectives of the study are to: find out the extent southeastern residents of Nigeria are exposed to insecurity messages via new media; determine the extent to which new media has been used in communicating insecurity in among residents in southeastern, Nigeria and ascertain southeastern residents of Nigeria attitude based on their exposure to insecurity messages via new media.

The height of insecurity in the southeastern region is really troubling, as there have been records of killings, kidnapping, armed banditry, and robbery, among others (Oyawale, 2022). The issue has continued to cause fear and anxiety among people, especially as they see the reports in the media (Agbawe, 2019). As beneficial as new media is, is it being used properly to communicate the issue of insecurity with the goal of raising people's consciousness so that they can be security alert in order to avoid security problems? Or is it being used wrongly to spread false information that may in turn lead to more security tension among people?. The general objective of this study is to examine the utilisation of new media in communicating insecurity in southeast Nigeria. The specific objectives are to: (1)Find out the extent southeastern residents of Nigeria are exposed to insecurity messages via new media; (2)Determine the extent to which new media has been used in communicating insecurity in among residents in southeastern, Nigeria; (3)Ascertain southeastern residents of Nigeria attitude based on their exposure to insecurity messages via new media.

2. Theoretical Framework

To articulate this study the Technological determinism theory was used. Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) first proposed this theory, and Marshal McLuhan expanded on it in 1964 (Martin, 2022). The theory's central tenet is that a society's use of technology reveals much about what kind of society it is. Technology is supposed to influence a society's culture and shape its historical course

(Moore & Pham, 2020). Citizen journalists have evolved as a result of how communication has altered due to technological advancement. Around the world, news reporting has become more democratic, and social media are now used as channels for communication and impact (Ojomo & Sodeinde, 2021). The presence of new media technology has made the spread of information on security issues easy and prompt. The notion of technological determinism holds that technology has the power to influence social change and human interaction (Martin, 2022). ICTs' consequences and/or impacts on users, organisations, and society are the main emphasis of this idea (Zafer Can Ugurhan et al., 2021). It is believes that the invention and development of new technologies are linked to the current social, historical, economic, and cultural changes in human society (Shuter, 2012). These technologies stress that new media is transforming the world into an interactive forum, allowing individuals to express themselves, engage with friends, share personal information, and publish their own opinions on issues such as insecurity, governance among others on the new media platforms (Hallström, 2022). This theory is relevant because it provides the basis for us to understand that new media contributes in shaping our society and influenced how we interact especially as it concern issue of insecurity. With the aid of the new media people are now likely to know the security situation in a place and such knowledge usually serves as a guide in their actions (Tormey, 2020).

2.1. New Media and Insecurity

New media is defined as communication technologies that facilitate or improve interaction between users and with content (Gu et al., 2019). The phrase "web 2.0" is frequently used to refer to new media. It includes a wide range of online communication tools, including blogs, wikis, virtual worlds, social networking sites, and other social media (Flew, 2008).The new media have altered how information is looked for, processed, published, saved, and consumed for more than two decades (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). The new media provides countless niche social networks where users can congregate around a single subject for discussion (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Using extremely scalable and accessible communication mechanisms, the new media has made it possible for people to communicate socially (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). Web-based and mobile technologies are used to transform communication into a dialogue that is interactive (Gedik & Cosar, 2020). The exchange of text, images, music, video, and information in general is becoming more and more fluid among internet users owing to the new media (AlSadrah, 2021). There are online communities where people can share as much or as little personal information as they would like with others due to some platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp (Tanta et al., 2014).

Through social networking sites, the new media has also expanded social and political connections (Urlica & Boguslawska-Tafelska, 2021). Meanwhile, terrorist groups and miscreants use these new media to spread their propaganda, recruitment of new members, fund raising, training mechanisms, organise and strategize attacks and ways of escape, as well as and other forms of cybercrimes (Das & Pradip, 2021). Researchers Hennig-Thurau et al., (2010) did note that the fact that new media has empowered its users to become social communicators and content creators, there will always be a problem that is capable of causing security challenges in Nigeria as a result of the use of it wrongly (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Corroborating this assertion Kircaburun et al., (2020) contends that the power of new media makes it a vehicle for the development of insecurity issues if it gets into the wrong hands (Wang, 2022). No doubt, new media can be used to communicate insecurity to raise peoples' awareness in order take measures to stay safe. Regrettably, that same platform can also be used to fuel insecurity. This is why (Lehtisaari et al., 2018), observed that while new media has brought a multitude of prospects for transforming societies and advancing humankind through interactive information exchange, it has also created a catalogue of security issues that the society is currently dealing (Jiang & Park, 2021).

Lack of safety, risk, hazard, uncertainty, loss of confidence, state of doubt, inadequate guarding or protection, instability, problem, and feeling uncomfortable are some common words for insecurity (Jansen et al., 2020). Additionally, these common traits, in accordance with Achumba et al., allude to a circumstance in which there is a risk of harm, loss of life, property, or a means of subsistence (Huber, 2019). Because of this, they characterise insecurity as a state of ignorance, a lack of control, and the inability to take precautions against elements that could jeopardise an individual or group or render them defenceless (Sulestarini et al., 2020). Insecurity, according to Collett et al., (2021), is "the condition of worry or anxiety resulting from a real or perceived absence

of protection." It alludes to a lack of or insufficient freedom from risk. These descriptions of insecurity have been what the people of southeast Nigeria has been experiencing in recent times (Agbawe, 2019). Ajaegbu (2021) observed that the rate of insecurity in the southeast has become so worst that travelling on the highways have become a risky venture. The issue of the Unknown Gunmen has even contributed in aggravating it within the region (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018). In a study conducted by Ovia (2021) they looked at how Nigeria could use new media to improve national security. They asserted that there is a connection between the spread of security threats in the nation and the inefficient use of new media. In their 2021 study, Okedo-Alex et al., (2021) Nsude and Onwe found that, despite social networking's many advantages, which make it a desirable development, it has also significantly exacerbated Nigeria's security issues (Nsude et al., 2016). A study by Willems et al., (2021) found that respondents thought social media was utilised to convey security-related information. They believe that site abuse by social media users has resulted in security problems (Au Yong, 2018).

Onyeneke et al., (2018) conducted research on Nigeria's insecurity problem and the importance of morality and virtue ethics. They found that Nigeria's security challenge has taken on a formidable dimension that necessitates not only a multi-stakeholder approach but also that Nigerian leaders (Ikechukwu, 2021), politicians, and their allies be forced to maintain moral values and virtues in all of their activities in order to set an example for others and prevent needless suffering (Alawode & Adewole, 2021). In a study conducted by Montag et al., (2021) they found that social media use has significantly increased insecurity in Nigeria and has actually exacerbated the country's security issues (Nsude et al., 2016). Additional research reveals that Facebook is the social media network that worsens insecurity the most (Meilani et al., 2021). According to a study done by Dewing (2010) on the effectiveness of social media in preventing hate speech, fake news, and extremism in Nigeria, social media platforms have not been very successful in doing so. Khondker (2011), it was revealed that social media has increased social connection among individuals and that social media platforms are employed in promoting social and national insecurity, such as the situation in Nigeria's northern and south-eastern regions (Schober et al., 2016). It was also found that insurgents, Biafra agitators, and herders utilize social media platforms to spread their agendas, and that the general populace also uses social media platforms to spread propaganda, some of which is fake news (Apuke & Omar, 2021). The investigation also revealed that Nigeria's security situation is dire (Nwagboso, 2016).

Xiao et al., (2021) looked into how social media metrics affect how one perceives how media influences them and other people (TPP). According to the results, "social media metrics affect how people assess media influence on themselves and others" (p.1832). Furthermore, research shows that social media analytics serve as indications for message recipients. Onyeneke et al., (2018) looked at how the general population perceived media coverage of sectarian and separatist agitations in Nigeria. It made the causes of separatist agitation more clear (Mac-Ozigbo, 2021). A few of reasons are the federal government's opposition to reinstating Igbos into the political system, political imbalance, and alleged injustices against South easterners (Uduma et al., 2021). The goals of the study were assessed using a sample of 384 respondents. According to the poll, a higher proportion of participants had frequent access to media coverage of separatist movements (Joshua et al., 2019). Additionally, it demonstrated that radio, television, and newspapers were the main exposure mediums. Exposure to secession-related media reports was shown to be substantially linked with public perception. In a study on the impact of broadcast media security awareness, Ogbo et al., (2019) found a substantial correlation between broadcast media campaigns and audience security alertness.

3. Method

In this investigation, the researchers employed the survey methodology. A survey is the best type of research strategy for this study because it allows respondents' opinions on how new media are used to communicate insecurity in the Southeast to be sampled (Menon & Meghana, 2021). Respondents were given the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the usage of new media in the southeast region of Nigeria to communicate insecurity through this research process. In total, there are 22,012,828 population living in the southeast of Nigeria, according to the National Bureau of Statistics bulleting of 2020 (Uduma et al., 2021). To determine the samle size 384 was chosen as

the sample size for the study using the Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator at a 95% confidence level and a 5% error limit (Alawode & Adewole, 2021). The multistage sampling technique was used for the investigation. At the first stage the whole of states that make up southeast were selected they are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. At stage two the state capitals of these states were purposively selected for easy accessibility to the researchers' as well strong internet availability and as easy access to respondents who are literate and with smart phones. At stage three two communities from the state capital was randomly selected without replacement. The communities selected are Abia (Agu Ekweme and Umuawa), Anambra (Amawbia and Awka), Ebonyi (AgbajaUnuhu and NkalikiUnuhu), Enugu (Achi and Nike), Imo (Orji and Umuoyima). At stage four, the researchers purposefully dispersed the 39 copies of the questionnaire throughout the chosen communities in a non-proportionate manner among respondents who are literate and possess a smart phone through which they may access new media. The questionnaire used to collect the data was created in accordance with the study's research goals. The questions were framed in dichotomous and likert scale format. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics as well as bar chart.

4. Results and Discussion

The presentation and analysis of data are covered in this section. Out of the 384 copies of questionnaire administered to respondents 372 (96.8%) was returned while 12 (3.1%) was not returned. However, from the 372 returned 5 (1.3%) was invalid hence it was excluded. Therefore, the analysis was done with 367 copies of questionnaire.
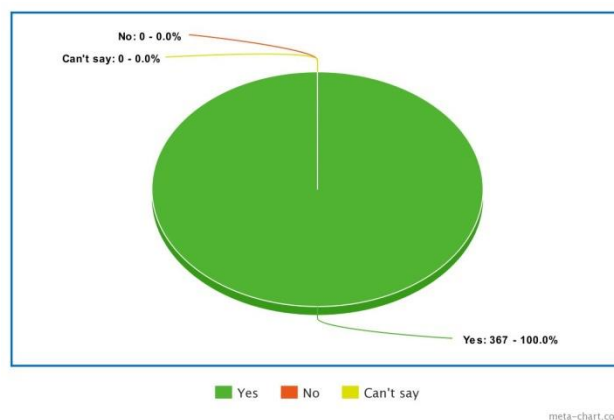

Fig. 1. Respondents' view on whether they have smart phone that enable new media applications

All of the respondents have smart phones that support new media applications, according to the data in Fig. 1 above. This indicates that all of the study's respondents had smart phones that support new media applications.
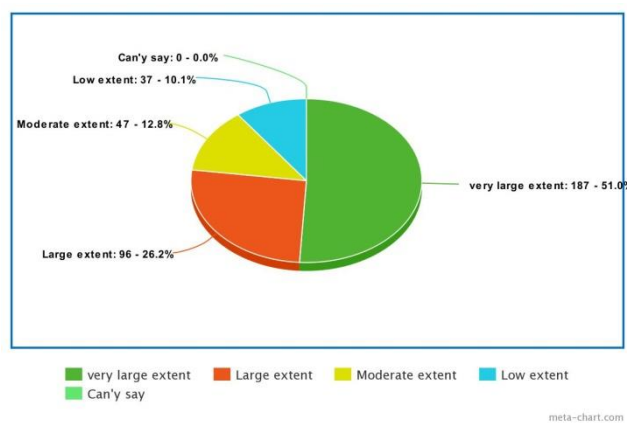

Fig. 2. Respondents' view the extent southeastern residents of Nigeria are exposed to insecurity messages via new media

Data from Fig. 2 as seen above shows that 51.0% of respondents acknowledged having been exposed to insecurity messages via new media to a very great extent. Implicitly, it suggests that the respondents are exposed to a lot of messages about insecurity through new media.
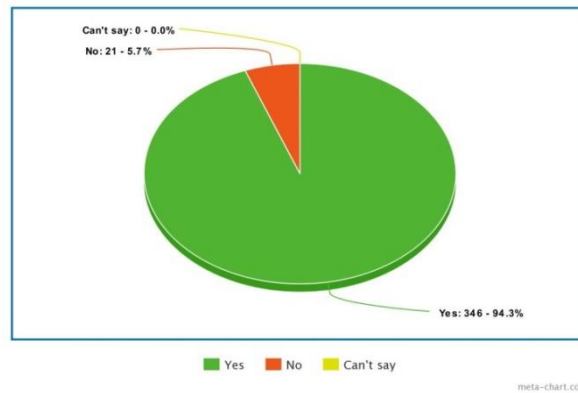

Fig. 3. Respondents' view on through the new media information on insecurity are usually communicated

The data in Fig 3 reveals that 94.3% of the respondents agreed that through the new media information on insecurity are usually communicated. This suggests that the majority of respondents agreed that information about insecurity is typically provided through new media.
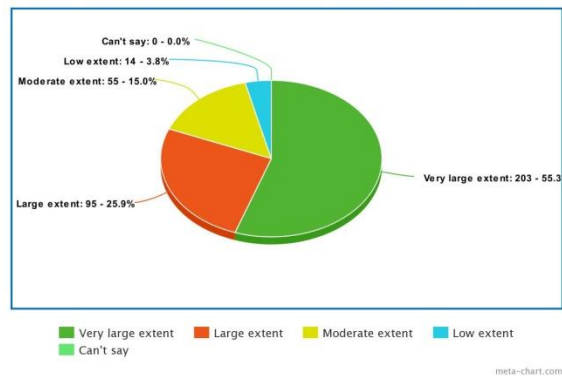

Fig. 4. Respondents' view on the extent to which new media has been used in communicating insecurity among residents in southeastern, Nigeria.

According to analysis of the data in Fig. 4, 55.3% of respondents agreed that a significant amount of the insecurity among inhabitants of southeast Nigeria has been communicated through the new media. This indicates that citizens of southeast Nigeria have been made aware of the insecurity to a very big level through the use of new media.

Table 1. Responses on the southeastern residents of Nigeria attitude based on their exposure to insecurity messages via new media

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	TF	M	Decision
I hardly keep late night	129 (35.1%)	149 (40.5%)	57 (15.5%)	32 (8.7%)	367 (100)	3.0	Accept
I usually ask of the security situation of a place before I go there	175 (47.6%)	145 (39.5%)	22 (5.9%)	25 (6.8%)	367 (100)	3.2	Accept
I'm careful now especially when dealing with strangers	143 (38.9%)	174 (47.4%)	36 (9.8%)	14 (3.8%)	367 (100)	3.0	Accept
Average mean						**3.0**	

Variables: SA=Strongly Agree, 3.3-4.0: A=Agree,2.5-3.2:D=Disagree, 1.8-2.4:SD=Strongly Disagree, 1.1.7

The researchers draw the conclusion that the respondents do not have a positive attitude based on their exposure to insecurity messages via new media if the average mean score is less than 2.5 (1-2.4). However, the researchers determine that the respondents have a positive attitude based on their exposure to insecurity messages via new media if the average mean score is higher than 2.4 (2.5-4.0).

From the mean average 3.0 (N=367), it can be concluded that respondents have respondents have positive attitude based on their exposure to insecurity messages via new media. In line with their responses, the researchers infer that respondents have positive attitudinal dispositions towards insecurity because of their exposure insecurity messages on new media.

The goal of this study was to examine the use of new media in communicating insecurity in Southeast Nigeria. Results showed that all the respondents studied had smart phones that enabled new media applications, as seen in Fig 1. Further results showed that 51.0% of respondents had been exposed to insecurity messages via new media to a very large extent. This finding is consistent with that of Baumel et al., (2021), who found that in the post-COVID-19 era, the majority of respondents were heavily exposed to social media messages about insecurity. Also, the study of Chukwuere & Onyebukwa (2018) revealed that social media has increased social connection among individuals. This exposure will significantly improve people's security alertness. This corroborates the finding of (Ezemenaka, 2021), who revealed that media security awareness campaigns have a way to influence audience security alertness. This finding is consistent with the technological determinism theory on which this study was based, because exposure to insecurity messages as a result of new media will have a significant impact on people in society, particularly those who are directly exposed to the messages (Aldunate & González-Ibáñez, 2017).

Findings revealed that on an average of 74.8% (N=367), it was revealed that the new media has been used in communicating insecurity among residents in southeastern Nigeria to a very large extent. Respondents agreed to the fact that the new media has been heavily utilised in communicating insecurity messages. This may be a result of the free flow of information within the media space. This result is in line with that of Chukwuere & Onyebukwa (2018), who reported that social media platforms are used to spread propaganda, some of it fake news, including by insurgents, Biafra agitators, and herders. They also reported that social media platforms are used to promote social and national insecurity (Khan et al., 2019). The fact remains that in communicating an insecurity message, the new media can either be used to fuel further insecurity problems or help curtail them (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Though several pieces of empirical evidence have shown that new media have contributed greatly to the insecurity challenges in Nigeria, as seen in the findings of (Owan et al., 2020), who revealed that as much as social networking is a welcome development because of its numerous benefits, it has also contributed highly to security challenges. Similar findings were made by Ughasoro et al., (2021), who found that social media has significantly increased insecurity in Nigeria and has really contributed to security issues. This may be the reason (Xiao et al., 2021) found that social media networks in Nigeria have not been able to stop extremism, hate speech, and fake news. The implication of this finding is that the new media has been heavily used to communicate insecurity in the southeastern region of Nigeria.

Further results showed that, with a mean average of 3.0 (N = 367), respondents have a positive security attitude based on their exposure to insecurity messages via new media. What this means is that respondents have positive attitudinal dispositions towards insecurity because of their exposure to insecurity messages in new media. This finding is in consonance with that of Gedik & Cosar, (2020), who revealed that a higher proportion of respondents had frequent exposure to media reporting on secession agitations, and their perception was found to be significantly correlated with exposure to secession-related media reports. Similarly, Szablewicz (2020) found that the presence of social media metrics shapes perceptions of media influence on oneself and others. Also in line is the study of Markom et al., (2019), who revealed that due to the rate of insecurity in the southeast region of Nigeria, people now take extra measures to protect themselves from harm. (Ojomo & Sodeinde, 2021) revealed that exposure to social media messages on insecurity can influence residents' perceptions of and attitudes towards insecurity measures. This result is consistent with the technological determinism theory, which holds that technology can influence social change and human interaction.

5. Conclusion

Drawing from the findings of this study, we conclude that the new media is highly utilised in communicating insecurity in southeast Nigeria. It is also the conclusion of this study that respondents are largely exposed to new media messages on insecurity and this exposure have contributed in influencing their attitude positively towards insecurity in southeast Nigeria. The following suggestions are made in light of the findings: (1)The fact that respondents are exposed to new media messages on insecurity the platform can be very useful in raising the consciousness on the need to be security alert especially now the security situation in the southeast is very precarious; (2)New media users should be sensitized on the need to use the platform appropriately or with a sense of responsibility instead of using it to fuel more security problems within the southeastern region of Nigeria; (3)In order to maintain the positive attitude towards insecurity respondents should be constantly encouraged by those in authority or media outlets to always avail themselves to information that can help them maintain top security alertness.

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